

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7446

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0378

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, GB, US

SUBJ: WITHDRAWAL OF AGREEMENT REQUEST

REF: LIBREVILLE 0368

1. I HAD OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS WITH PRESIDENT EVENING
FEB. 27 GOG DECISION WITHDRAW AGREEMENT REQUEST FOR
PIERRE MEBALEY AS REPORTED REFTEL.

2. BONGO MADE CLEAR THAT DECISION WAS RESULT OF PERSONAL
PIQUE WITH MEBALEY, AND THAT IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH
POLICY QUESTIONS. ACCORDING TO PRESIDENT, MEBALEY HAD
COME TO HIM IN NOVEMBER WITH PROPOSALS FOR ORGANIZING
ASPECTS OF MARCH 12 RENOVATION DAY CELEBRATIONS, FOR
WHICH HE HAD WON BONGO'S AGREEMENT. AT TIME WHEN
PRESIDENT SUPPOSED HIM TO BE HARD AT WORK ON ARRANGEMENTS,
MEBALEY TURNED UP IN PARIS TO ANNOUNCE THAT PLANS HE HAD
PROPOSED WOULD NOT WORK OUT AND TO REQUEST PERMISSION
FOR EXTENDED LEAVE INVOLVING TRAVEL IN EUROPE AND
SOUTH AMERICA.

3. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, PRESIDENT VONTINUED, HE HAD
DECIDED THAT MEBALEY WAS NOT THE MAN HE REQUIRED FOR
POST TO WHICH HE WISHED ATTACH INCREASING IMPORTANCE.
IF SENT TO WASHINGTON, PRESIDENT REMARKED, MEBALEY
WOULD DO NOTHING BUT TRAVEL AROUND TO ALL 50 STATES AS
TOURIST AND NOT PERFORM REQUIRED WORK. THUS, PRESIDENT
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CONCLUDED, HE HAD DECIDED LEAVE MEBALEY IN ZAIRE AND

SEND MORE "SERIOUS" DIPLOMAT TO OCCUPY WASHINGTON EMBASSY.

4. COMMENT: INASMUCH AS MEBALEY HAS BEEN PRESENTED TO US BY PRESIDENT AS HIS PERSONAL CHOICE FOR WASHINGTON POST, WITH EXPLANATION THAT SELECTION OF EX-MINISTER WAS INTENDED HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO USG/GOG TIES, WE HAD BEEN CONCERNED LEST WITHDRAWAL OF MEBALEY'S NOMINATION REFLECT SHIFT IN PRESIDENT'S DECLARED INTENTION TO UPGRADE STATUS OF POST. FROM BONGO'S OWN TESTIMONY, THIS HAPPILY IS NOT THE CASE. HOWEVER, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE PRESIDENT'S NEW CHOICE WILL BRING ANY GREATER DYNAMISM TO WASHINGTON EMBASSY THAN IT HAS KNOWN UNDER DIRECTION OF ACTUAL INCUMBENT. STEIGMAN

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